

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 479 988

FL 027 800

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TITLE Optimizing Basic French Skills Utilizing Multiple Teaching Techniques.  
PUB DATE 2003-05-00  
NOTE 60p.; Master of Arts Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and SkyLight Professional Development Field-Based Master's Program..  
PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses (040) -- Reports - Research (143) -- Tests/Questionnaires (160)  
EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*French; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; Secondary Education; Story Telling; Student Attitudes; Student Evaluation; \*Teaching Methods  
IDENTIFIERS Total Physical Response

## ABSTRACT

This action research project examined the impact of foreign language teaching techniques on the language acquisition and retention of 19 secondary level French I students, focusing on student perceptions of the effectiveness and ease of four teaching techniques: total physical response, total physical response storytelling, literature approach, and a traditional grammar text. Analysis of pre-intervention data revealed a high number of students performing poorly in first year language classes. Analysis of foreign language class enrollments revealed that many students did not continue on to higher levels of study. Probable causes for student performance and enrollment numbers included student expectations, learner preferences, foreign language teaching methods, and the classroom environment. Student frustration levels in acquiring and retaining foreign language skills were obtained using student self-report surveys. Additional data were obtained using analysis of students' performance on classroom assessments. Results indicated that using multiple teaching methods produced the least student frustration and optimum achievement. As the study progressed, students responded positively to various methods as techniques matched their learning styles or intelligences. Results suggest the importance of maximizing total physical response, engaging students in whole class activities, incorporating storytelling, and using student questions to introduce grammatical explanations. Appended are: Preliminary Reflections questionnaire; Student Self-Reflection questionnaire; and Student End Survey. (Contains 34 references.) (SM)

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## OPTIMIZING BASIC FRENCH SKILLS UTILIZING MULTIPLE TEACHING TECHNIQUES

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Carol Skala

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts of Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & SkyLight

Field-Based Master's Program

Chicago, Illinois

May 2003

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## ABSTRACT

This paper reports the effectiveness of foreign language teaching techniques as they impacted the language acquisition and retention among 19 French I students enrolled in one secondary school located in a rapidly developing suburban area of the Midwest. The study was conducted as an action research project from August through December 2002. The purpose of this research was to acquire student perceptions of effectiveness and enjoyment of four teaching techniques within the grammatical and communicative methodologies.

Analysis of pre-intervention data revealed a high number of students performing poorly in first year language classes. Analysis of foreign language class enrollments revealed many students do not continue on to higher levels of study. Probable causes for student performance and enrollment numbers include student expectations, learner preferences, foreign language teaching methods, and the classroom environment.

Varying the foreign language teaching methods was selected as the intervention. Student frustration levels in acquisition and retention of foreign language skills were obtained using student self-report surveys as French was taught utilizing various teaching techniques. Additional data was obtained using document analysis of student's performance on classroom assessments. The four teaching methods utilized in the study were Total Physical Response, Total Physical Response Storytelling, literature approach, and a traditional grammar text.

At the conclusion of the study, data indicated that using multiple methods of teaching a foreign language would produce the least student frustration and optimum student achievement. As the study progressed, students responded positively to various methods as techniques matched their learning styles or intelligences. Some students enjoyed one method more than others. Results suggest to utilize Total Physical Response to its maximum potential, engage students in whole class activities, incorporate Storytelling in the classroom and to use student questions to introduce grammatical explanations. In sum, each method had something to contribute to students' foreign language learning experience; yet, overuse of any method may contribute to student frustration, affecting achievement.

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My grateful thanks to my husband, my primary supporter, who filled the roles of part-time mother, childcare provider, as well as housekeeper for the duration of the many hours invested in this research project.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

#### General Statement of the Problem

French I students at the targeted high school express frustration at their ability to acquire and retain basic French skills. A need to explore teaching methods to optimize learning is shown through student's classroom demeanor, letter grade distribution, as well as student dropout rate at the semester break. Evidence of the problem includes student's individual test scores, writing samples, speaking abilities, and self-reports of their personal and class performance in French.

#### Immediate Problem Context

The targeted high school is currently experiencing rapid growth. With an overall district population growth rate of nearly 25% per year, every school in this unit district (encompassing grades pre-kindergarten through twelve) is experiencing inordinate growth. The high school currently consists of nearly 800 students, which, when broken down into various demographics (86.8% White, 7.2% Hispanic, 3.9% Asian, 1.9% Black and 0.3% Native American, totaling 3,188 students as last counted September 2000 for the district report card statistics) confirms that the original homogeneous rural farming population is beginning to diversify. Minimal racial issues are present in the daily

operation of the high school. Overall the school exhibits exceptional attendance patterns with a high school drop out rate of 2.4%, and an attendance rate paralleling the district-wide attendance rate of 95.5% (an attendance rate of 100% implies all students attended every day). The districts' over all truancy rate is 0.6%. The high school's spring graduation rate is 79% with many of those remaining graduating at the end of the summer term. The relatively high mobility rate of 19% within the district can be attributed primarily to growth, as the statistic is based on the number of students who enroll in or leave during a school year (students are counted each time they transfer out or in).

The targeted high school is located in a facility built in 1996 and substantially expanded in 2002. The targeted high school is currently located in a rural farming community that is rapidly being engulfed by suburban sprawl. The school functions within a block scheduling format – eight classes per semester, using an alternating four period day plan. The building is equipped with current computer technology available to students and teachers, complete with Internet connections and various technology programs. Class size is typical for the area, with an average high school class of 21 pupils per classroom.

Academically the targeted high school performs well. The average student ACT score of 22% compares well with the state's average of 21.7%. Performance on Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT) at elementary levels, as well as on the Prairie State Achievement Exam (PSAE) given at secondary levels is noteworthy across all subject areas tested. With a high staff growth rate, it is logical that the teachers within this district are significantly less experienced on average due to the overwhelming growth rate than more stagnant districts. The average number of year's experience in this targeted

district is only seven years; percentage of teachers having received master's degrees is 25.2%. Generally the district's classroom teacher demographics match the students' demographics with 98% White, 0% Black, 1% Hispanic, 1% Asian, and 0% Native American, and a teacher gender break of 23.4% male to 76.6% female. The teacher-pupil ratio of 17.6, certified staff ratio of 14.6 and administrator ratio of 245.2 are similar to state averages.

### The Surrounding Community

The community is generally supportive of the school district, having passed multiple building referendums to provide facilities to house this incredible growth with an additional referendum proposed for November 2002. Also of note is the presence of a large retirement community (residents age 55 or older are direct neighbors of the high school) located within the district, which skews population demographic statistics that may otherwise appear to be average.

Economically the district is typical of suburban regions with a low income percentage of 3.5%, as defined by families receiving public aid, live in institutions, supported in foster homes or receive free/reduced-price lunches, and a limited-English-proficient population of 2.4% as defined by students whose first language is not English. Parents are involved in their students' education as shown by a district wide parent contact time average of 99% pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, (includes parent teacher conferences, parental visits to school, school visits to home as well as telephone and written correspondence), and a high school parent contact time of 97%, both significantly above the state average of 94.5%.

The financial portrait shows an equalized assessed valuation (1998) of \$97,644 valuation per pupil in 200 of \$6,379 with a total school tax rate per \$100 of 4.52 (1998). Operating expenditure per pupil in 1999-2000 of \$6,377 portrays a school district in relative health. (Equalized assessed valuation includes all computed property values less exemptions and adjustments; total school tax rate is the district's total tax rate as seen on tax bills; instructional expenditure includes direct costs of teaching – a narrow and restrictive definition; operating expenditure includes instructional expenditures, costs of pupil support services, instructional staff support services, school administration, business support services and central support services.)

Overall this targeted high school is typical of many high schools experiencing rapid growth from rural communities to suburban areas.

#### National Context of the Problem

It becomes clear based on the research that "language learning styles and strategies are among the most important variables influencing performance in a second language" (Oxford, p. 4). When addressing language learning at the secondary level it makes sense to educate students, not only about foreign language, but about their personal learning styles as well. This approach is beneficial given "research indicates that language learners at all levels use strategies, but that some or most learners are not fully aware of the strategies they use or the strategies that might be most beneficial to employ" (p. 4).

Identifying the most useful strategies for students and teaching them these strategies as well as and other techniques in a brain compatible manner is a logical conclusion based on available research. Identifying strategies may assist in helping to

reduce students' frustration as they acquire and retain basic skills in French class. To acquire and retain a second language should be a primary goal of a foreign language program, rather than merely a by-product of years spent in a foreign language classroom.

Looking beyond existing instructional methodology and perhaps even beyond recognizing the learning styles of students is a positive step in the foreign language classroom. Oxford stated that "Language learners use different learning strategies, specific actions and behaviors to help them learn, at least partly because their general learning styles, or overall approaches to learning and the environment, are so varied" (Abstract). Additionally passing beyond identifying in which of the multiple intelligences a student may be strong or weak and actually teach students *how* their style of learning, multiple intelligences, and the teacher's methodology blends together to create a learning environment for each student adds more dimension to the student's learning experience. As Oxford noted, "Language learning strategy research has suffered from overemphasis on metacognitive and cognitive strategies... at the expense of other important considerations" (p. 4).

In addition to student strategy use, several themes emerge from an analysis of literature regarding teaching foreign languages: foreign language teaching methodologies; the classroom environment; and student's expectations and learning preferences. Currently, the two predominant foreign language methodologies are the grammatical approach and the communicative approach. Each methodology endorses different instructional techniques that support a more grammatical or more communicative focus. Among the techniques typically noted are: Total Physical Response (TPR), Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS), The Natural Approach,

Natural Exposure or Immersion, the Grammatical Method, as well as the thematic or holistic approach (Oxford, 1989). (Some of the techniques are not as applicable to the secondary level.) Each approach to teaching foreign language has its strengths and weaknesses. Each technique has effective elements that enable acquisition and retention of a language, yet every technique has areas of weakness that do not effectively address the process of language learning from the students' perspective.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

#### Problem Evidence

To document the extent of student frustration in acquiring and retaining foreign language skills in French I the researcher administered a survey to participants at the targeted high school and conducted a document analysis of school records of prior first year language students' performance. A review of the data collected is presented in this chapter along with literature related to probable causes that may contribute to student frustration in foreign language learning.

#### Preliminary Reflections Survey

As previously mentioned, a Preliminary Reflections Survey (Appendix A) was administered to 19 participants prior to intervention. Participants recorded reflections on their (1) perceptions of French skills, (2) frustration levels when learning French, (3) learning styles, (4) multiple intelligences, (5) classroom techniques, and (6) personal considerations. Results of the data indicate that some student frustration exists as early as August. The most convincing arguments for the existence of student frustration were comments such as "I get frustrated in all classes" and "I can't remember some stuff." Despite students' written concerns of anticipated frustration levels in learning French, no

students marked anticipated frustration levels of "High" or "Above Average." Six students marked "Minimal" and twelve marked "Average" as their anticipated level of frustration in learning French (Table 2.1). Several positive comments of note: "Spanish only slightly frustrated me" and "I really want to learn French!"

Table 2.1

Overall French Frustration Level as Reported on Preliminary Reflections

| Anticipated frustration level | Number of students responding |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Minimal                       | 6                             |
| Average                       | 12                            |
| Above Average                 | 0                             |
| High                          | 0                             |

Students were insightful about their potential performance in French class. Their comments of perceived French skills included: "I'm not good at writing and grammar," "It's hard," and "I have trouble writing French." Despite such comments, students remained optimistic about their perception of French skills (Table 2.2). Only 3 students marked "Not Successful" in their anticipation of how they might perform on writing in French. Three students indicated they anticipated being very successful on test performances, one indicated very successful perceptions on French writing, with all other student responses located in the partially successful and successful categories.

Table 2.2

## Perception of French Skills as Reported on Preliminary Reflections

| Response Categories | Success Level  |            |                 |
|---------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------|
|                     | Not Successful | Successful | Very Successful |
| Tests               | -              | 10         | 3               |
| Writing             | 3              | 4          | 1               |
| Speaking            | -              | 13         | -               |

Data taken from prior first year language classes confirms student difficulty in acquiring and retaining foreign language in their first year language classes. A significantly higher number of students perform poorly in their first year language program than in subsequent years with the number of failing grades highest in the first year classes (Table 2.3 and 2.4). Although statistical data is not available on the numbers of students choosing not to continue to a second year of a language, class lists confirm that all students who had enrolled in a first year Spanish or French language class do not continue on into their second year program.

Table 2.3

## Student semester grades reported December 2001

|                     | Letter Grades |    |    |    |    |       |
|---------------------|---------------|----|----|----|----|-------|
|                     | A             | B  | C  | D  | F  | Other |
| French I<br>n=63    | 11            | 24 | 12 | 7  | 9  | 0     |
| Spanish I<br>n=187  | 35            | 62 | 38 | 33 | 18 | 1     |
| Spanish II<br>n=111 | 31            | 51 | 26 | 3  | 0  | 0     |
| Spanish III<br>n=51 | 14            | 22 | 13 | 2  | 0  | 0     |
| Spanish IV<br>n=20  | 14            | 6  | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0     |
| N=339               |               |    |    |    |    |       |

Table 2.4

Student semester grades reported June 2002

|                     | A  | B  | <u>Letter Grades</u> |    | F | Other |
|---------------------|----|----|----------------------|----|---|-------|
|                     |    |    | C                    | D  |   |       |
| French I<br>n=47    | 7  | 18 | 11                   | 5  | 6 | 0     |
| Spanish I<br>n=97   | 22 | 30 | 25                   | 14 | 6 | 0     |
| Spanish II<br>n=109 | 30 | 45 | 28                   | 4  | 1 | 1     |
| Spanish III<br>n=45 | 11 | 12 | 17                   | 4  | 1 | 0     |
| Spanish IV<br>n=17  | 12 | 5  | 0                    | 0  | 0 | 0     |
| N=225               |    |    |                      |    |   |       |

## Probable Causes

Many factors influence student frustration in acquiring and retaining foreign language skills at the high school level. Informal conversations with teachers at the targeted high school revealed perceptions that low performance may be a result of lack of student effort; and that some students' frustrations may be due to a lack of talent in foreign languages. Work ethic and students' classroom behavior are concerns when teachers discuss possible causes for student foreign language frustration. Informal conversations with students revealed frustration and boredom with classroom techniques used, lack of "real world" application and feeling overwhelmed with the quantity of rules and vocabulary to memorize. Additionally, a review of student records indicated a significant failure rate in the first year of foreign language study (Table 2.3 & 2.4) and a high attrition rate as language study progresses.

Four themes emerged from these factors: (1) the students' expectations; (2) learner preferences; (3) foreign language teaching methodologies; and (4) the classroom environment. The factors of student expectations and learning preferences are issues students must address as individuals. Teaching methodology and classroom environment were selected as the primary probable causes to investigate as they are the only themes directly under the control of the classroom teacher.

#### Teacher Factors

Overall, teaching methodologies and classroom environment must be compatible with how the brain learns to provide an effective learning experience in any subject. Although it is possible for students to acquire and retain skills in a non-brain-compatible environment, logically, the more aligned the learning experience with the way the brain learns, the more efficient and effective the process. Unfortunately, informal discussions with classroom teachers reveal that drastically modifying classroom norms is a time consuming risk that many are unwilling to take. It is often easier to continue to teach using the same method than to explore other methodologies. The phrases: "That's how I learned it" as well as "It was good enough for me, it's good enough for them" need not have a place in today's continually developing field of brain-based classrooms.

#### Teaching Methodologies

Teaching methodologies play a significant role in presenting foreign language instruction. Each approach to teaching foreign language has effective elements that enable acquisition and retention of a language, as well as areas of weakness that hinder language learning. Two methods of foreign language teaching are strongly influencing foreign language classrooms at this time: Grammatical and Communicative Methods.

Out of these two main methods have arisen several teaching techniques (Total Physical Response (TPR), Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS), the literature approach and the grammatical method. Even within one district, teachers may subscribe to differing teaching methodologies.

Total Physical Response (TPR) developed as a result of a psychology study on how language is learned (Baird, 2001). TPR primarily functions on command/response communication between the teacher and the student – as commands are given in the target language the student responds with action. TPR is an exceptionally effective language learning strategy for all ages, although its weakness in expressing concepts that cannot be performed as well as its focus on speaking rather than reading or writing presents a problem.

Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) was developed as a solution in expressing complicated concepts and emotions not possible with TPR (Ray & Seely, 2001). Similar to the Natural Approach and Natural Exposure/Immersion approach, TPRS encourages students to learn the language naturally, through exposure and attempts at speaking phrases and eventually sentences in the target language (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). The Natural Approach, TPRS and Natural Exposure/Immersion often fail in providing students a grammatical understanding of the structure of the target language. Additionally, when TPRS students are asked to act out, retell, or create their own stories, a shy or traditional student may be forced beyond their comfort zone.

The literature approach treats foreign language similar to a traditional language arts class, in which literature is read, discussed, written about and analyzed. "Literature is the pivot around which curriculum can revolve" (Richard-Amato, 1996, p. 206).

Richard-Amato further noted that writing, speaking, and listening can be incorporated as they relate to the literature used. Through pre-reading, reading and post-reading, students are led to fully create meaning from the text, extending it beyond the context of the literature itself. While this approach exposes students to native sentence structures through the text, it is often frustrating for students with low vocabulary in the targeted language.

The grammatical method uses textbooks to guide students through the grammatical structure of the targeted language. Through teacher presentation of information and student practice through written activities and specific spoken responses grammatical understanding and communication is to be achieved (DeMado, J. & Rongi  ras d'Usseau, 2002). While excellent in explaining the structure of the language, this method typically does not adequately prepare most students for non-structured communication.

#### Classroom Environments

The classroom environment is a major component of the students' learning experience. The physical classroom environment and the more non-tangible classroom climate influence student learning. It is critical that teachers consider the environment as they begin establishing rapport with students as well as when teaching. Commoner commented, "...living in an environment of educating students, we must discover and follow the ecological principles that define our brain's capabilities and limitations" (Commoner as cited in Sylwester, 1995, pp.140-141).

Brain research can be used to understand how a person learns as well as to hypothesize how the brain learns most efficiently. The results of many studies are

beginning to sketch a hazy picture of the brain as it learns. Many brain-based scientific theories mirror a concept many educators have understood and built upon for years: stimulation is the key to enriched environments. Sylwester (1995) summarized that "all mammalian brains process information similarly" and "because neurons thrive only in an environment that stimulates them to receive, store, and transmit information, the challenge to educators is simple: define, create, and maintain an emotionally and intellectually stimulating school environment and curriculum" (pp.129-130). A classroom environment that is not brain compatible will lead to unnecessary frustration in its students.

A classroom environment may also be probable cause for students' frustration at their ability to acquire and retain basic French skills. Clark-Ridgway (2000) discussed the significance of the classroom atmosphere on the language learner and provided information on initial language learning and cultural understanding. Due to limited access to French culture and language in the community apart from the teacher's instruction in the classroom, students may be frustrated by not easily using their classroom knowledge in real world situations. Richard-Amato (1996) suggested avoiding stereotypes and encouraging mutual respect in the classroom when the community environment may negatively affect the foreign language learner. Based on existing research Richard-Amato concluded that using affective activities or humanistic techniques creates "good feelings on the part of the students toward the teacher, each other, and the resulting classroom environment" to neutralize the effects of a negative community influence (p.80).

### Student Factors

Each student enters the classroom with individual experiences and expectations that either help or hinder the learning process. The sum of these experiences creates a personal history that affects the learning of each student. Often students entering a foreign language class have a better grasp of the language if they have previously learned another foreign language. If the languages are similar in form these students will have an even greater advantage. Personal observations have shown that students previously exposed to foreign cultures and communications are less hesitant and more comfortable with the uncertainty of learning a new foreign language. Students who are not aware of the significance of their own experiences and expectations will have more difficulty modifying their learning experience to better match their learning styles and expectations.

*Student Expectations.* Students' personal expectations are a key component leading to academic frustration. "Students' expectations of their performance in a foreign language course are important predictors of their future achievement." (Daley, Onwuegbuzie, & Bailey, 1999, p.3) Students carry with them preconceived ideas of how they will perform in a foreign language. According to Daley et al., the majority of students (61%) have expectation biases, with nearly half of them over-estimating their future levels of performance (1999). Additionally, *The Role of Expectations in Foreign Language Learning* (1999) provides an overview of how student expectations lead to frustration in learning a foreign language. With so many students unable to accurately predict their foreign language abilities, it is equally possible that these students would be frustrated at not being able to achieve at their perceived ability level.

*Learner Preferences.* "Language learners use different learning strategies, specific actions and behaviors to help them learn, at least partly because their general learning styles, or overall approaches to learning and the environment, are so varied." (Oxford, 1989, Abstract) Each student entering the classroom is a unique individual. It makes sense that students are unique in their learning preferences as well. Unfortunately, many students are not aware that their individuality extends beyond their personal preferences and into their learning experiences. Oxford stated, "some or most learners are not fully aware of the strategies they use or the strategies that might be most beneficial to employ...language learning styles and strategies appear to be among the most important variables influencing performance in a second language" (Abstract). Additional research presents how the brain learns from a neurological, biological as well as developmental perspective. Genesee (2000) cites individual brain differences as sources of influence on language learning. More specifically it may be concluded that the teacher of a foreign language classroom must realize that every student will learn the language in an individualized way and at a unique rate of acquisition based on specific learning preferences.

#### Other Considerations

There are many more issues that may lead to student frustration in acquisition and retention of French skills. Student learning may be hindered by learning disabilities, physical handicaps, speech or hearing impairments, as well as home environments that do not enable a student to succeed in a foreign language classroom. However, the intent is to address the larger issue of teaching methodologies in the classroom especially as affected by the classroom environment, learning preferences and student expectations.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

##### A Review of the Literature

After consideration of the probable cause evidence and the local context of the targeted school, many options exist to reduce student frustration and improve foreign language skill acquisition and retention. Many factors interact to create the foreign language learning experience. Teaching methodology and the classroom environment are two probable causes directly under the control of the teacher. The additional factors of student expectations as well as personal learning preferences are also major components of a person's ability to acquire and retain foreign language skills. A student's language learning aptitude, attitudinal/motivational factors, personality characteristics and learning style are significant student attributes that impact learning (Oxford-Carpenter, 1989). Therefore, the teacher must not only consider the teaching methods selected but look beyond them at the students themselves as well as at the classroom environment in which the learning occurs to more fully understand possible solutions to the problem.

##### Learner personal preferences

Although student learning methods lie outside the control of the classroom teacher, knowledge of students' learning strategies, modalities, and intelligences allows

the teacher to better address student needs in the classroom. A student's learning style encompasses personal cognitive style (preferred or habitual patterns of mental functioning); patterns of attitudes and interests; a tendency to seek situations compatible with existing learning patterns; as well as a tendency to use certain learning strategies and avoid others (Oxford, 1989). Additionally, Oxford suggests that "learning style has a significant influence on students' choice of learning strategies, and that both styles and strategies affect learning outcomes" (p.2).

There are many strategies utilized by foreign language learners. Oxford (1996) lists six strategy subscales: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective (emotional, motivation-related), and social strategies. Student choice of strategies is determined not only based on the applicability of the strategy to the task but also upon the student's comfort with the strategy. Generally, a more proficient learner uses a wider range of strategies more appropriately and flexibly than less proficient learners who often are unaware of their strategy use (Kevorkian, 1997; Oxford, 1989; Oxford, 1992). Oxford (1996) states that some strategies are more appropriate than others for a given task and for the student's own learning style and that both students and teachers need to become aware of strategy use. The impact of appropriate strategy use is profound. Language learning strategies have the ability to increase attention, enhance rehearsal - which allows strong linguistic linkages, improve encoding and integration, and increase retrieval of information (Oxford, 1992). Awareness of student strategy use allows teachers to more effectively design language instructions and enables them to provide relevant strategy instruction (Oxford, 1996). Since learning strategies can be improved or modified through training, Oxford suggests teachers weave strategy instruction, referred

to as instructional techniques, into the classroom in a comfortable yet explicit manner (Oxford, 1989; Oxford, 1996; Oxford-Carpenter, 1989).

The Learning Strategies Instructional Resource (LSIR) provides a guide to strategy instruction. Teachers are not to develop "strategies lessons" (National Capital Language Research Center, 2000) but rather encouraged to integrate strategies into regular coursework through selecting appropriate material, drawing on students' existing strategy knowledge and by modeling strategy use frequently. Additionally, teachers are encouraged to focus on student processes, not merely student products, as well as to emphasize the metacognition of why each strategy works while simultaneously coaching when to use each strategy. The LSIR divides 17 specific strategies into four general categories (plan, regulate, problem-solve and evaluate) and provides examples of how to introduce and teach specific strategies. Student self-evaluation of strategy use is an important component of the LSIR program.

### Expectations

All students begin their foreign language learning experience with pre-existing expectations. These expectations, which include the learner's emotional state and motivations (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982; Krashen, 1982), are significant factors in how the student perceives their progress in foreign language learning. While first languages are no longer believed to interfere with second language acquisition, a student's aptitude for language, attitudinal factors, motivation, age and nature of previous experiences impact language learning (Brumfit, 1984).

In addition to pre-existing expectations, each student brings into the classroom a variety of skills, capacities, relevant knowledge, attitudes toward learning as well as other

personal characteristics (Clark & O'Mara 1991). For older learners the frustration of communicating at a lower level of intellectual functioning, awkwardness associated with imaginative learning situations, and difficulty modifying established self-identity might additionally influence language acquisition (Gardner, 1991). Spolsky (as cited in Clark & O'Mara, 1991) considered Second Language Learning Anxiety as a condition that impacts learners with low initial proficiency, low motivation and high general anxiety, for they may develop a level of anxiety that interferes with language use and learning. Gardner stated "It is recognized that among adults, as among children, there are varying degrees of success" and questions "as to whether or not there are any relatively consistent predictors of these differences in achievement" (p. 2).

One such predictor of student future achievement is expectation of performance. Daley et al. (1999) stated that students' attitudes of expected foreign language achievement are important predictors of actual achievement. Student expectations may act as a self-fulfilling prophecy – low expectations may lead to underachievement. Daley et al. initially cite research that most learners have an accurate perception of their language learning ability. However, the study's revealed most students appear to have an inaccurate perception of their foreign language abilities, with nearly half over-estimating their future levels of performance. Further, students with self-derogating expectations may use this belief as a defense mechanism against loss of self-esteem in the event of failure. Modifying extreme student expectations may aid students in more realistically progressing in their foreign language skills. Daley et al. suggested the possibility of counseling for low-academic achieving students to realign their effort with their achievement and expectations.

### Classroom Experience

After considering the complex role of students in foreign language learning, the role of the teacher in providing the optimum classroom learning experience require attention. Research abounds on the topic of ideal classroom environment. Overall, students learn through use of the language. Edelsky, Altwerger & Flores stated that children "learn language by using language the way their culture uses it" (1991, p. 66). Further a review of the literature revealed that "the basics of a language is best accomplished in contexts where the learner is focused on understanding or expressing an idea, message, or other thought in the new language" (Dulay et al., 1982, p. 4). Yet, how does a teacher create this ideal context and ideal language use? Current brain research provides some answers as to how the brain learns best.

Rich sensory and hands-on learning is needed in an ideal educational environment, however, lecture based instruction and written information abounds in most educational experiences (Hannaford, 1995). A more brain compatible manner of instruction involves both the emotional and physical elements of the student. Use of emotion, touch and students' prior experiences help students learn more efficiently. Without bodily involvement, learning is harder and less successful than it could be. Even students in high school "crave course work that develops the body as an expressive and disciplined instrument" (Quinn, 2001, p. 2). Sylwester (1995) stated that emotion drives attention, a concept that is reinforced by current brain research. Hannaford (2000) concluded that movement anchors thought and thinking is manifested through the use of the muscles in our bodies. Further research indicates that touch, combined with other senses, causes much more of the brain to be activated, building more complex nerve

networks and therefore tapping into more learning potential. Experiences, physical or emotional, engage the senses and the learner fully, which ideally improves learning and retention.

Perhaps creating ideal learning conditions for language study would assist in acquisition and retention of language skills with minimal frustration. "If learning activities are dull, meaningless, distasteful, or otherwise perceived as not worth doing, it is unlikely that extrinsic factors, however strong and positive in general, will provide the impetus that is necessary to reach the required levels of receptivity and investment" (Van Lier, 1991, p. 37). Several ideal learning conditions include: a) the foreign language should be presented in a meaningful, comprehensible dialogue (Brumfit, 1984; Genesee, 2000; Krashen, 1982; Ray & Seely, 2001) and b) sufficient repetition must be provided within the classroom (Genesee, 2000). Additionally, concrete language examples and here and now connections must be present (Dulay et al., 1982; Genesee, 2000; Krashen, 1982) as well as student participation in a low stress classroom environment (Ray & Seely, 2001; Sprenger, 1999; Van Lier, 1991). Dulay et al. proposed nine detailed teaching guidelines consistent with Krashen's "monitor theory" of language acquisition. Other insights on language practice include Ellis' semantic wheel of types of language practice as referred to by Van Lier. Spolsky (as cited in Clark & O'Mara, 1991) referred to 74 conditions affecting the language learning process. In addition to these conditions, researchers also emphasize the importance of a silent period as well as the role of "teacherese" or "teacher speech" (also referred to as motherese, caretaker speech or foreigner talk) as a manner of simplifying language to aid in student comprehension (Van Lier, 1991; Krashen 1986). Many of these ideal language learning conditions exist

across several teaching methodologies. It is beneficial to briefly consider the literature regarding several methods and their effectiveness in light of these conditions.

#### Grammar methods:

There is much literature on the topic of grammar and its place in classroom instruction. At the core of the discussion is the issue of the goal of foreign language instruction: Is the goal of foreign language education knowing about the language or communication using the language? The answer to this question directly impacts the manner in which grammar is taught. Garrett (1986) defined grammar as a compilation of forms and statements about form paradigms, lists and word-order rules. Savignon, as quoted by Garrett, states "A person demonstrates grammatical competence by using a rule, not by stating a rule" (p.134). Many educators imply that since most students in the past have learned using grammar, this must be the way language should be taught. A primary criticism of the grammatical method is that knowledge of the language and the rules that regulate use does not constitute linguistic mastery especially in communicative areas (Dulay et al., 1982; Garrett, 1986; Garrett, 1989; Genesee, 2000; Krashen, 1982). An additional criticism of the method is that the use of grammatical terminology to classify foreign language parts of speech is new vocabulary itself (Garrett, 1989).

There are some who believe that a melding of communicative and grammatical goals may produce improved linguistic results (Garrett, 1986). Students in Dupuy's study (1997) expressed disillusionment with grammar only instruction because "in spite of all the time spent and efforts made to learn the rules and practice them, the effects have been small, and short-lived" (p. 290). Van Lier (1991) suggested that grammatical materials be used by students on their own, at home, for reference and individual practice

as needed. Many researchers believe that grammar should act as a "monitor, (Dulay et al., 1982; Genesee, 2000; Krashen, 1982)". However, thinking of grammar as "a body of knowledge against which the result of production or comprehension can be checked; but ...not...thought of as a starting point for the actual production of utterances" (Garrett, 1989, p. 21) is a relatively new way to approach grammatical teaching. Additionally, creation of grammar as the structure of language requires attention to be drawn to grammatical and linguistic information when present. A teacher's guidance is needed or grammatical information will pass by relatively unnoticed and linguistic gains will be relatively small (Shook, 1994).

#### Communicative methods:

Total Physical Response (TPR) is strongly supported by brain research.

Hannaford explained how we learn and incorporate new words into our vocabulary:

"Each sound, word, and phrase is supported by an elaborate internal image display.

Whenever we read anything, the brain is actively putting the words into known sensory images so we may understand them. Our sensory experiences, both external and internal, shape our way of imaging and, therefore, our thinking. Our bodies are fully involved in this quest" (1995, p. 31). Classical TPR consists of instructor commands with student imitation, a technique that works effectively regardless of age or language (Baird, 2001).

TPR is a low stress method for it mimics the way a baby learns language and is compatible with right/left hemisphere learning.

Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPRS) builds upon the tradition of TPR while adding drama and storytelling into the classroom (Ray & Seely, 2001). Brain research also supports storytelling as a means of learning (Hannaford, 1995). As students

are exposed to oral stories their brains create elaborate internal pictures and emotions connected to understanding and new nerve networks are formed. Repetition of the story allows for elaboration and myelination of the nerve paths. Students should then tell the story themselves and play-act the story to give them additional sensory understanding. Quinn (2001) also suggested storytelling as a means to incorporate movement into the curriculum while Sprenger (1999) additionally suggested storytelling is an effective way to use multiple memory lanes to incorporate parts and wholes simultaneously.

Natural Approach and Natural Exposure/Immersion expose students to language as it occurs naturally. Communicative activities consume most of the classroom learning experience while explanation and formal work are done outside the classroom (Dulay et al., 1982). These approaches are comprehensible, interesting/relevant, not grammatically sequenced, contain a high quantity of spoken foreign language, low affective filter levels and provide tools for conversational management (Krashen, 1982). Although similar to TPR and TPRS, the Natural Approach does not provide for direct translation of "chunks" of language (Ray & Seely, 2001).

Literature is often utilized in a foreign language classroom. Appropriate literature helps in comprehension, provided the language is of appropriate difficulty and length (Dupuy, 1997). Students in Dupuy's study described self-selected readings as a liberating experience, which built their confidence in French, and indicated a wish to share their readings in class discussion groups. Several studies on integrating literature into foreign language classes provide insight as to the possibilities for use of literature in student's learning. Dupuy cites research by Krashen, which suggested that "extensive reading is at least as effective, if not superior, to grammar instruction and practice in

promoting first and second/foreign language acquisition" (p. 285). Dupuy found 100% of the students preferred readings to grammar instruction and practice, further reporting that students indicated a combination of self-selected readings and assigned readings was most beneficial. Additionally, Dupuy's subjects reported "that their grammar and vocabulary improved through extensive reading, and that it happened without them realizing it" (p.290). Of note when considering literature is that shorter versions of text led to better comprehension than the text in longer versions (Dupuy & Krashen, 1993; Leow, 1997).

Primary importance in teaching literature is the existence of textual manipulation and explicit instruction (Leow, 1997). Without the reader's attention on specific grammatical information, linguistic forms cannot be further processed. Additionally, multiple exposures to the text improve student performance. Fluency listening activities (although not simple repetition) also increase student abilities (Brumfit, 1984; Atwell, 1994). Literature can also aid in incidental vocabulary acquisition even when students are reading for meaning, not translation (Dupuy & Krashen, 1993). Overall, literature is an enjoyable tool to improve student knowledge in the foreign language classroom .

#### Summary of Literature

Language education is not a science. A multitude of variables are involved in every language classroom. It is an important realization that "No one is going to prove, even provisionally, that a particular language-teaching procedure is better than another" (Brumfit, 1984, p. 19-20). Von Lier (1991) expressed a desire that teachers may someday find security and direction without having to rely on a book or method. This sentiment is echoed by Garrett (1989), "We must change our efforts to focus on learning

rather than on teaching, and we must address the individual learner's needs. There is no best method or best approach for all classroom foreign language learners" (p.25). It is also wise to focus not on student's seemingly slow gains, nor on the magnitude of the gain but rather upon the direction of the student's progress (Shook, 1994).

#### Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of varied teaching methodology, during the period of August through December 2002, French I students in the targeted secondary school, will provide feedback on acquiring and retaining foreign language skills based on four foreign language teaching techniques.

In order to accomplish the project objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Prepare lessons plans with appropriate materials utilizing four foreign language instructional techniques: TPR/games/, TPRS and literature, and grammar method.
2. Instruct students using four foreign language instructional techniques.
3. Assess students on foreign language skill acquisition and retention through individual test scores, writing samples, oral samples, and self-reports of their personal and class performance in French.

#### Project Action Plan

The following plan was designed to implement four major components: creating lesson plans and materials, instructing students, assessing students, and acquiring student feedback regarding their satisfaction with their performance and frustration levels in French I class.

Lesson plans based on applicable teaching methodology were divided into two categories: Communicative (including related activities of Total Physical Response, Total Physical Response Storytelling and literature) and Grammar Method (the more traditional textbook based activities). Communicative techniques and the contrasting traditional grammar method all require different lesson plans and materials.

After lesson plans and materials are prepared, the researcher will instruct students utilizing each intervention. TPR will be used August through the second week in September and progress into TPRS the second week in September through the second week in November. The literature approach will begin with students reading the novel *Pauvre Anne* (Ray, 2000) in November. The traditional grammar method will use the textbook *Allez viens!* of the Holt, Rinehart and Winston series (DeMado & Rongieras d'Usseau, 2001), and begin the third week in November through the semester end in December.

Students will be assessed as compatible with each methodology:

#### A. Writing Samples

1. TPR – create a list of commands leading to completion of a task
2. TPRS and literature approach – rewrite a classroom story with a different ending
3. grammar method – write an original essay of specified length focusing on specific grammatical components

#### B. Oral Samples

1. TPR – respond to verbal commands

2. TPRS and literature approach – answer verbal questions based on a story as well as read aloud a section of literature
3. grammar method – read aloud a section of literature

#### C. Test Assessments

1. TPR – testing imperative/command verbs as well as vocabulary recognition and recall
2. TPRS and literature approach – testing third person and imperative/command verbs including negation, vocabulary recognition, and sentence structure/word order
3. grammar method – testing all verb persons (first, second and third, singular and plural), vocabulary recognition and sentence structure/word order

At various intervals during the intervention and during the grammar method, student feedback on foreign language skill acquisition, retention and personal frustration levels in relation to the foreign language teaching method used will be collected using monthly self-reports (August through December). In December, at the close of the intervention and grammar methods, exit surveys will be administered to students.

#### Methods of Assessment

Methods of assessment include a document analysis, preliminary and exit surveys, and student self-report. The document analysis includes a review of students' performance at mid-term and quarter marking periods. The survey and self-reports involve students' attitudes and beliefs related to class methodologies. The survey and

self-reports will also be used to gather data about students' satisfaction with French skills, overall class performance, perceptions of classroom methods and perspectives on how learning styles affect achievement.

The Preliminary Reflection (Appendix A) and Student Self-Reflection (Appendix B) each cover four topic areas and consist of 32 questions regarding students' perceptions of their learning process and frustration level. The questions for these self-reports require varied response types. Twenty-three questions are limited choice, while nine are free response. The Preliminary Reflection will be completed once in August while the Student Self-Reflections will be completed monthly beginning in late August. Self-reports will be distributed to all French I students at the beginning of the class period. To ensure confidentiality, students will be identified by a number, and requested to place their completed self-reports in a sealed individual envelope collected by the researcher and stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's classroom. The Student Self-Reflection provides the researcher with information on the frustration level of French I students while the Preliminary Reflection provides insight into possible causes.

The Student End Survey (Appendix C) includes 15 questions in four categories: 1) satisfaction with French skills, 2) overall French ability, 3) perception of classroom methods used, and 4) personal considerations. The Student End Survey will be distributed by the researcher to French I students at the targeted secondary school at the end of the first semester. Confidentiality will be ensured similar to the procedure for student self-reports. Through use of this survey the researcher will analyze student frustration in French class and possible causes of the frustration.

The document analysis includes a review of existing school records on the students' French I classroom performance in the targeted classroom. Throughout the semester the researcher will conduct document analysis using a computerized record-keeping program (Integrate Pro©). The researcher will review students' writing samples, oral responses and test scores and compare the information to the students' self-reflections of performance and frustration level. Through use of the document analysis the researcher will compare students' self-reports of frustration and skill level to actual classroom performance.

Each of these methods of assessment will provide insight on students' acquisition and retention of foreign language skills throughout the duration of the study. Specifically, each method will collect information essential to understanding how student's frustration levels, acquisition and retention of the foreign language vary as a result of the intervention of each teaching methodology.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PROJECT RESULTS

#### Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to provide feedback on the acquisition and retention of foreign language skills based on four foreign language teaching techniques. The researcher used two foreign language instructional methodologies – grammatical and communicative. The communicative techniques of TPRS and related activities of TPR, oral reading and literature discussion were used as interventions. The Grammar Method included use of the traditional textbook and supporting materials. Overall, 19 students participated in the study with only one lost early in the study as a result of a scheduling change.

Students at the targeted high school were exposed to four foreign language instructional techniques. Each technique was used for the duration of one unit, which typically lasted six to seven weeks. Upon completion of each unit participants were surveyed. Additionally, prior to the full implementation of the interventions, students in the targeted classes were given Preliminary Reflections Surveys (Appendix A). The surveys were designed to gauge participant's perceptions of current and anticipated frustration levels in the targeted French I class. At the end of each technique, Student

Self-Reflections (Appendix B) were administered and collected in anonymous envelopes to ensure confidentiality. Likewise, Student End Surveys (Appendix C) were handled similarly at the end of the semester, one class period prior to the final exam. Due to time constraints and student's class schedules interviews were not conducted as originally planned.

A document analysis of the participants' academic achievement proved particularly insightful. Although the marking periods did not precisely fall at the end of units, typically the units and techniques changed within one week of the end of terms. This allowed some comparison between the students' midterm and quarter grades. Through analysis of student grades it was possible to compare student achievement as the various techniques were implemented.

Original plans called for the preparation of lesson plans and materials utilizing each method followed by assessment of student writing samples, oral samples, and tests. These plans were modified to place less emphasis on students' writing and oral samples and to utilize test assessments to a greater degree. Writing samples did provide essential information in showing the developing abilities but did not provide a means to numerically compare techniques. The length of students' writing samples and the percentage of students turning in writing work also provided insight into student's attitudes regarding writing, and indirectly, the ease at which the writing occurred. Similarly, oral samples provided insights into student comprehension and ability to speak the language. Nevertheless, due to the difficulty in assessing the oral samples, classroom responses were only casually noted and not officially recorded. Audiotape recording of students' speaking abilities did not occur as anticipated. Instead, only anecdotal records

were kept on students' speaking skills. Teacher controlled test assessments were accurate portrayals of student learning within the classroom environment. Test assessments (typically created by the teacher and given at the end of a unit) focused on students' grammatical abilities in the areas of vocabulary, verb conjugation and sentence structure. Analysis of students' test scores and percentiles revealed areas of mastery and weakness.

#### Presentation and Analysis of Results

The study was completed in December 2002 after observing 19 students in the targeted foreign language class throughout the first semester of French I. Students were asked to reflect on their levels of frustration at the end of each classroom unit. Frustration levels varied slightly over the duration of the study as teaching methodologies changed. Students' reported the lowest levels of frustration under TPR instruction. Students reported minimal frustration levels of 39% and 40%, with 61% and 60% of students reporting average frustrations on August and September's self reports respectively (Figure 4.1 & 4.2). As the semester progressed, student's reporting minimal

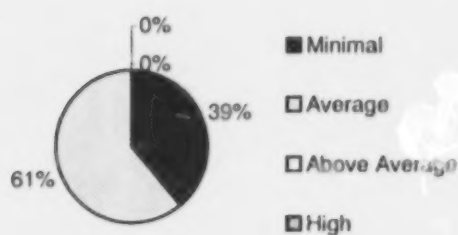


Figure 4.1 Student's frustration level during Total Physical Response (August).

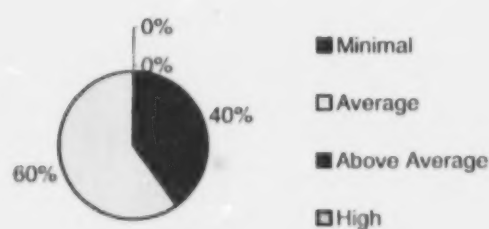


Figure 4.2 Student's frustration level after Total Physical Response (September).

frustration levels rose to 70% while the average frustration level dropped to 18%, with 12% of the students reporting above average frustration levels (Figure 4.3) at the conclusion of TPRS. November's student frustration levels returned to numbers similar to those at the beginning of the study with 53% of students reporting minimal frustration and 47% reporting average frustration (Figure 4.4) at the end of literature approach. At the conclusion of the grammar method, the percentage of students reporting minimal frustration was 43%, while the average frustration level rose to 44% and the number of students reporting above average frustrations was the highest of all at 13% (Figure 4.5).

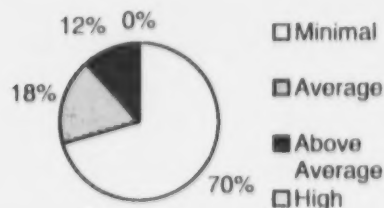


Figure 4.3 Student's frustration level after Total Physical Response Storytelling (October).

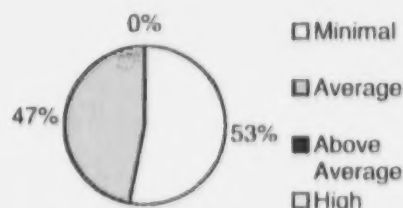


Figure 4.4 Student's frustration level after literature approach (November).

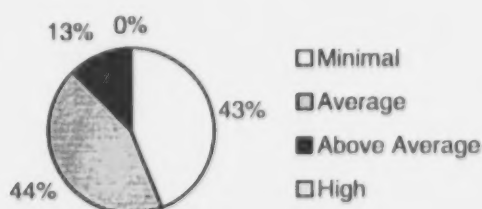


Figure 4.5 Student's frustration level after grammatical method (December).

Student satisfaction levels also varied throughout the intervention (Figures 4.6 – 4.10). The largest numbers of students not satisfied with their test scores occurred after the grammar method (Figure 4.10), while student self-reports after TPR contained the largest numbers of students not satisfied with their writing abilities (Figure 4.7). A high

number of students reporting partial satisfaction with their levels of achievement also occurred after TPR, literature and grammar. Four students reported partial satisfaction with their test scores after TPR and after grammar. Similarly, four students reported partial satisfaction with their speaking ability after literature and grammar. The highest levels of partial satisfaction with speaking abilities were six students after TPR, while the highest levels of partial satisfaction with writing abilities were five students after literature (Figures 4.7 – 4.10). The highest levels of students reporting very satisfied with test scores occurred at the beginning of the TPR intervention, with the highest levels of students reporting very satisfied with writing abilities occurring at the end of TPR. Two students reported very satisfied with their speaking abilities during TPR and grammar.

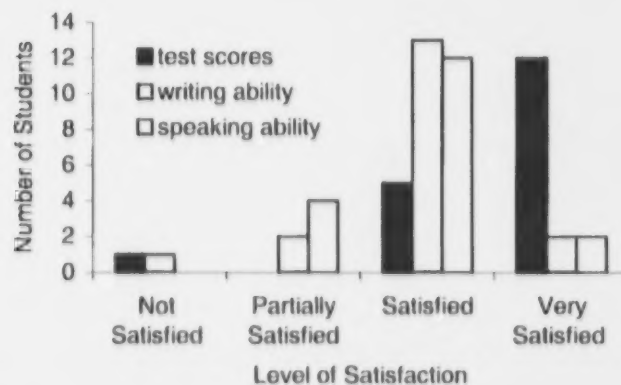


Figure 4.6 Student's self-reported frustration levels during Total Physical Response.

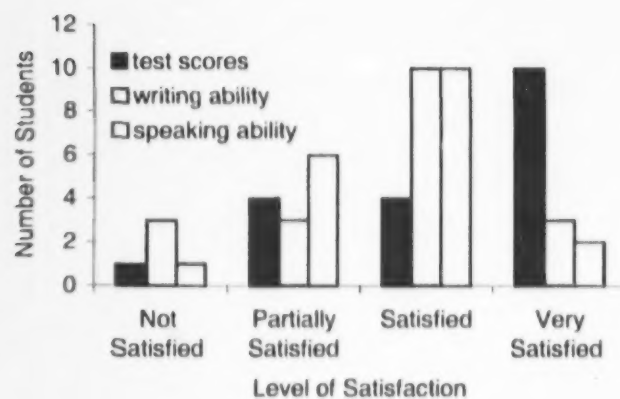


Figure 4.7 Student's self-reported frustration levels after Total Physical Response.

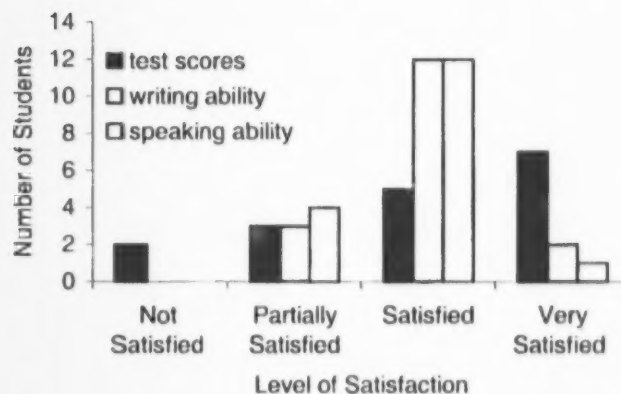


Figure 4.8 Student's self-reported frustration levels after Total Physical Response Storytelling.

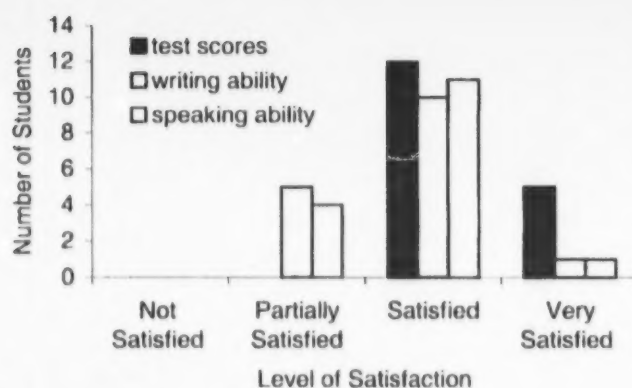


Figure 4.9 Student's self-reported frustration levels after literature approach.

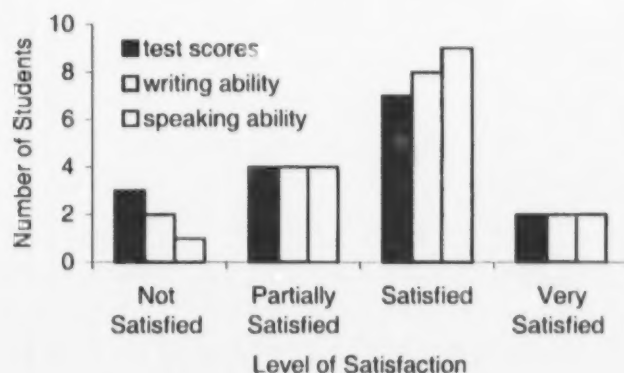


Figure 4.10 Student's self-reported frustration levels after grammatical method.

Academic achievement generally reflected students' frustration levels (Table 4.1). In September a majority of students had earned an A average or higher. As the year progressed and teaching techniques changed, student academic achievement mirrored perceptions of effectiveness. At the end of the first marking period (Quarter One) student achievement remained high after the conclusion of the TPR and TPRS interventions as 13 students earned a mark of A, three earned a B mark and two students earned a mark of D. Notably, in November's progress marks, many students' grades dropped to a B or lower.

Only eight students received an A, four students received a B, six students earned a C while one student had fallen to a D during this period. At the conclusion of the second marking period, student achievement remained similar to the mid-term grades. Semester grades are calculated using first and second quarter grades as 80% of the semester mark, with a final exam adding the remaining 20% of the semester mark. Students generally performed poorly on the final exam due to its grammatical focus. This factor combined with lower second quarter grades contributed to the resulting semester end grades.

Table 4.1  
Student grades reported September through December 2002

| Marking Period     | <u>Letter Grades</u> |   |   |   |   |       |
|--------------------|----------------------|---|---|---|---|-------|
|                    | A                    | B | C | D | F | Other |
| September Progress | 14                   | 3 | 2 | - | - | -     |
| Quarter One        | 13                   | 3 | 2 | - | - | 1     |
| November Progress  | 8                    | 4 | 6 | 1 | - | 1     |
| Quarter Two        | 7                    | 4 | 6 | 1 | - | 1     |
| Semester End       | 7                    | 7 | 4 | - | - | 1     |

Students generally had a positive outlook on their experience of French I. Students were asked to report on their perceptions of the effectiveness of various methodologies and their enjoyment of each. TPR was generally perceived as the most effective with 95% of the students reporting a favorable response – 50% reported very effective and 45% reported somewhat effective, with only 4% reporting not very effective and 1% reporting minimally effective (Figure 4.11). The order of student perception of effectiveness was TPR (95%), class activities (90%), TPRS (89%), and book grammar (58%) (Figures 4.11 – 4.14). Book grammar received effective level

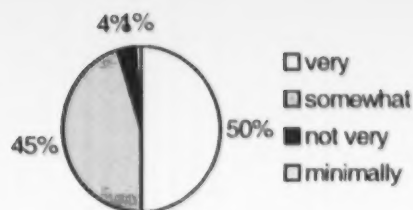


Figure 4.11 Students' self-reported perceptions of the effectiveness of Total Physical Response.

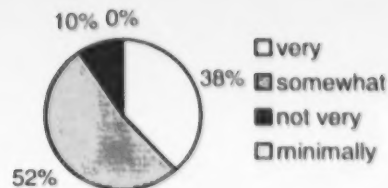


Figure 4.12 Students' self-reported perceptions of the effectiveness of class activities.

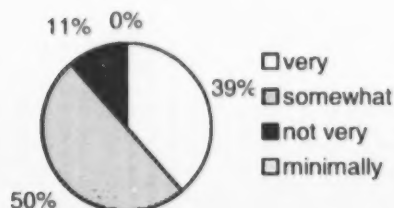


Figure 4.13 Students' self-reported perceptions of the effectiveness of Total Physical Response Storytelling.

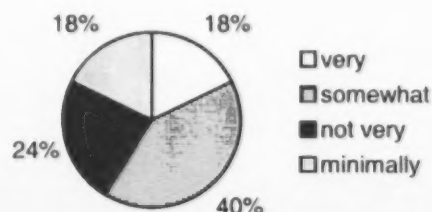


Figure 4.14 Students' self-reported perceptions of the effectiveness of book grammar.

reports of 18% minimally, 24% not very, 40% somewhat and 18% very effective (Figure 4.14). TPRS received a report of 11% not very, 50% somewhat, 39% very effective with no students reporting the technique as minimally effective (Figure 4.13). Class activities received a report of 10% not very effective, 52% somewhat effective with no students reporting the technique as minimally effective (Figure 4.12).

Enjoyment of the various methodologies was diverse although book grammar, the method typically used by foreign language teachers, received the lowest ratings. The highest ratings of enjoyment were reported for class activities. Class activities received a 94% enjoyment rating – 38% found the technique very enjoyable, 56% liked it, and 6% disliked it (Figure 4.15). TPRS received the second highest enjoyment rating – 33%

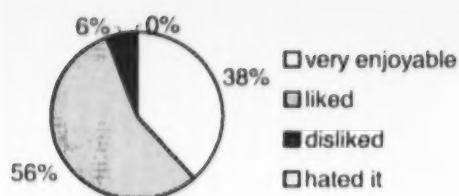


Figure 4.15 Students' self-reported perceptions of enjoyment of class activities.

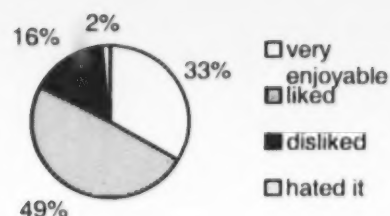


Figure 4.16 Students' self-reported perceptions of enjoyment of Total Physical Response Storytelling.

rated it very enjoyable, 49% liked it, 16% disliked it, and 2% found they hated the technique (Figure 4.16). TPR received a 74% enjoyment rating – 42% rated it very enjoyable, 32% indicated they liked it, 24% disliked the technique while 2% hated it (Figure 4.17). The remaining technique, book grammar, received extremely low enjoyment ratings (Figure 4.18). Specifically, book grammar had 18% of the students hate it, strong dislike was felt by 41%, with only 41% of the students reporting liked and no one stating the method was very enjoyable.

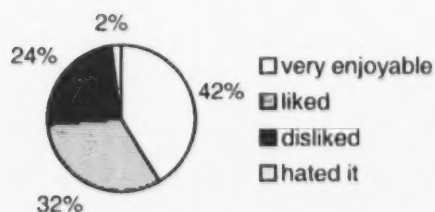


Figure 4.17 Students self-reported perceptions of enjoyment of Total Physical Response.

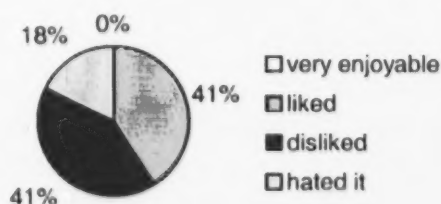


Figure 4.18 Students' self-reported perceptions of enjoyment of book grammar.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data collected on student frustration and achievement levels in French I, students were most frustrated at the conclusion of the traditional book grammar unit than with any of the techniques of the communicative method. The students reported their lowest satisfaction levels with their test scores at the end of the grammar unit and perceived the method as the least effective way to learn French. Interestingly, comments indicated that more students enjoyed tests and quizzes than enjoyed book grammar. Aside from low student opinion of the book grammar, there are other conclusions that can be drawn from these results regarding the place of each technique in a foreign language program.

Students reported that the TPR technique was the most effective for learning and least frustrating to them. Under its use students reported the most satisfaction with their tests and quizzes. Unfortunately this technique is typically used at the start of language study and eventually discarded as students master the basic commands of language (body parts, classroom objects, basic movement). With such positive experiences reported by students, it would appear that TPR must find additional applications in the curriculum.

Class activities also received positive ratings among the students. The highest level of enjoyment and the second highest rating of effectiveness were reported with this technique. In addition, students often mentioned class activities on their surveys as the teaching technique best for them: "The class activities (are best) because it is experience with the language" and "Class activities – everybody gets involved." Comments such as these are a call for teachers to involve their class in language use and not merely to teach the students passively in their desks. Other comments about class activities included: "Activities, keeps me awake" and "Class activities! They just help me remember stuff better 'cuz it's not boring."

Unfortunately, due to the construction of the student self-report form, little information can be gleaned about the literature used during the month of November. A low level of frustration was reported during the month. However there was no category provided on the self-report for students to express opinions about *Pauvre Anne* that was read and discussed in class. Despite the missing category, several students commented on their opinions of the book and its use in November's comment section: "I like them, they help me put my sentences together when I'm speaking," "I feel good because I will eventually be able to keep up with the speed." "I enjoyed reading and translating Poor Anne." and "Very affective." Several students wrote comments regarding boredom while reading: "Boring! Class used to go by faster, now it drags on," and "Boring, reading all the time but interesting that we can understand most of it." One student requested more literature, "Another story." Yet another student requested "To do more acting things like the translating and acting it out like the *Pauvre Anne* thing" as an activity that would assist in learning French more efficiently.

It was a surprise at how effective and enjoyable TPRS scored on the student self-reports. Unlike many of the other techniques used to teach French, TPRS involves multiple steps and often takes a significant amount of time for a teacher to gain mastery. There is much information available on TPRS and the comprehensive way the technique addresses students' learning styles and multiple intelligences. However, without personal experience using the technique, reluctance to accept blanket statements of success is understandable. At the close of the study, students rated TPRS as the third most effective technique after TPR and class activities, and second in terms of their enjoyment despite teacher awkwardness in its use.

Overall, acquisition of specific data regarding specific language techniques contributed to an enjoyable experience with this research project. Instead of relying on the belief that one manner of foreign language teaching is more effective or enjoyable than another, specific data is now available to support the choice to use one method or technique over another. Within the data acquired, there are several factors that may have impacted results. Foremost, the order that the methods were introduced may have influenced the data received. Students may feel frustrated to a greater degree early in the program, or when the excitement and newness of the experience wears away and French becomes a class like any other. Other peaks of frustration may occur at the end of quarters and as progress reports are generated, as students are concerned about the grades they have earned. Various school vacations and events also enter the picture as the high school student is greatly influenced by various extracurricular activities in which they participate and give their time. The role the teacher plays in the students' frustration and achievement cannot be ignored either. A sympathetic teacher may ease frustrations while a more academically demanding teacher might otherwise impact students' desire to achieve.

The applications of this study must be chosen with care. The suggestion that one method of teaching a foreign language is "better" than another, is more effective or more enjoyable is tempting. However, there is great danger in such a generalized judgment. As the study progressed, different students latched on to the various methods. Some students enjoyed one method that others suffered through. Several students learned a concept under one method and blossomed as another method presented the topic in a different manner.

Using the data discovered in this study, the recommendation is to use multiple methods of teaching a foreign language. In more detail, it is suggested to use TPR to its maximum potential, never fully leaving the idea of bodily involvement as a key aspect to learning. It is

additionally suggested to engage the class in many whole class activities, as moving about and relating to other students gives great practice in the language and breaks up the monotony of the classroom experience. Further, TPRS has a place in the classroom. Its integration of TPR and class interaction provides the advantage of using both techniques with the added opportunity for brief grammatical explanations. In sum, each method and technique has something to contribute to the foreign language learning experience.

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# APPENDIX A Preliminary Reflections

Participant Number:

Class Period:

*Please complete the following reflection by circling the response that most accurately describes your opinions about learning a foreign language.*

## Perception of French skills

How will you perform on:

|                    |                   |                         |            |                    |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|------------|--------------------|
| Tests?             | Not<br>Successful | Partially<br>Successful | Successful | Very<br>Successful |
| Writing in French? | Not<br>Successful | Partially<br>Successful | Successful | Very<br>Successful |
| Speaking French?   | Not<br>Successful | Partially<br>Successful | Successful | Very<br>Successful |

Comment on any responses that received a marking of "unsuccessful":

## Overall French Frustration Level

|                                                       |         |         |                  |      |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------|------|
| Anticipate your frustration level in learning French: | Minimal | Average | Above<br>Average | High |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------|---------|------------------|------|

Comment on your response:

## Learning Styles

What learning style describes you the best?      Audio      Visual      Bodily

What learning style do you think you will use most in French class?      Audio      Visual      Bodily

Is this learning style a strength for you?      Yes      No

What types of Audio, Visual and Body activities do you anticipate doing in French class?

How do you feel about these activities?

# APPENDIX A cont.

## Multiple Intelligences

What multiple intelligence describes you the best?

Visual/  
Spatial

Naturalist

Verbal/  
Linguistic  
Interpersonal

Logical/  
Math  
Intrapersonal

Bodily

What multiple intelligence do you think you will use most in French class?

Visual/  
Spatial

Naturalist

Verbal/  
Linguistic

Logical/  
Math

Bodily

Musical

Interpersonal

Intrapersonal

Is this intelligence a strength for you?

Yes

No

What types of Multiple Intelligence activities do you anticipate doing in French class?

What can I do to help you learn French more efficiently?

## Classroom Methods:

Write three to five activities in the empty column below. Using the following rating system, circle the number that most accurately applies to your personal expectations of that activity.

Very Effective - Min. Effective

Very Enjoyable - Hated It

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Which activity will be best for you? Why?

Which activity will cause the most frustration for you? Why?

## Personal considerations

How much time do you anticipate spending studying French?

None

½ hour  
daily

1 hour daily

Over 1  
hour  
daily

What other factors may influence your performance in French?

# APPENDIX B Student Self-Reflection

Participant Number:

Class Period:

Circle Current Month:

August September October November December

*Please complete the following reflection by circling the response that most accurately describes your current experience in order to assist me in making your foreign language learning environment more effective.*

## Satisfaction with French skills

How satisfied are you with...

Your recent test scores?

|           |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Not       | Partially | Satisfied | Very      |
| Satisfied | Satisfied |           | Satisfied |

Your writing ability?

|           |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Not       | Partially | Satisfied | Very      |
| Satisfied | Satisfied |           | Satisfied |

Your speaking ability?

|           |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Not       | Partially | Satisfied | Very      |
| Satisfied | Satisfied |           | Satisfied |

Comment on any responses that received a marking of "unsatisfied":

## Overall French Frustration Level

Your current French frustration level:

|         |         |               |      |
|---------|---------|---------------|------|
| Minimal | Average | Above Average | High |
|---------|---------|---------------|------|

Comment on your response:

## Personal considerations

What was your average amount time outside of class spend studying French?

|      |              |              |                   |
|------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| None | ½ hour daily | 1 hour daily | Over 1 hour daily |
|------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|

In what ways did other factors influence your performance in French?

# APPENDIX B cont.

## Learning Styles

What learning style have you used most in French the last 4 weeks?

Audio                      Visual                      Bodily

Is this learning style a strength for you?

Yes                      No

What activities have we done using this style?

How do you feel about these activities?

## Multiple Intelligences

What multiple intelligence have you used most in the last 4 weeks?

Visual/ Spatial                      Naturalist                      Verbal/ Linguistic                      Logical/ Math

Bodily                      Musical                      Interpersonal                      Intrapersonal

Is this intelligence a strength for you?

Yes                      No

What activities have we done encouraging this intelligence?

What can I do to help you learn French more efficiently?

## Classroom Methods:

*Using the following rating system, circle the number that most accurately applies to your personal opinion of your learning experience*

| Very Effective - Min. Effective |   |   |   |                  | Very Enjoyable - Hated It |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------|---|---|---|------------------|---------------------------|---|---|---|
| 4                               | 3 | 2 | 1 | Class Activities | 4                         | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4                               | 3 | 2 | 1 | TPR              | 4                         | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4                               | 3 | 2 | 1 | TPRS             | 4                         | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4                               | 3 | 2 | 1 | Filmaerobics     | 4                         | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4                               | 3 | 2 | 1 | Book grammar     | 4                         | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4                               | 3 | 2 | 1 | Writing samples  | 4                         | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4                               | 3 | 2 | 1 | Tests/quizzes    | 4                         | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Which teaching technique is the best for you? Why?

Which teaching technique causes the most frustration for you? Why?

# APPENDIX C

## Student End Survey

Participant Number:

Class Period:

For each of the four categories below, choose the most accurate response for your situation.

| <u>Satisfaction with French skills</u>        | Unsatisfied | Partially satisfied | Satisfied | Very Satisfied |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------|----------------|
| How satisfied were you with your test scores? | 1           | 2                   | 3         | 4              |
| How satisfying was your end writing ability?  | 1           | 2                   | 3         | 4              |
| How satisfying was your end speaking ability? | 1           | 2                   | 3         | 4              |

| <u>Overall French Skills</u> | Minimal | Average | Above Average | High |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|---------------|------|
| Your acquisition of French   | 1       | 2       | 3             | 4    |
| Your retention of French     | 1       | 2       | 3             | 4    |
| Your frustration with French | 1       | 2       | 3             | 4    |

| <u>Perception of Classroom Methods</u> | Not effective | Slightly Effective | Effective | Very Effective |
|----------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Total Physical Response                | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              |
| Total Physical Response Storytelling   | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              |
| Grammatical Method                     | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              |
| Classroom Activities                   | 1             | 2                  | 3         | 4              |

| <u>Personal considerations</u>                           | Yes | No |
|----------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Had you ever considered dropping French?<br>If yes, why? |     |    |

|                                                               | None | ½ hour daily | 1 hour daily | Over 1 hour daily |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| How much time outside of class did you spend studying French? |      |              |              |                   |

Were there other incidences that affected your French class experience in some way?



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